

**GOAL:****6** Preserve New Hampshire's historic and cultural resources that are an integral part of the State's quality of life, economy, and visual character.

New Hampshire's historical and cultural resources add to the State's unparalleled quality of life, as much as its economy and open spaces. Compact villages surrounded by fields and forests define the visual character of the Granite State, and the comfort and sense of place that residents derive from such settings cannot be quantified. Yet these compelling places and landscapes are an important economic force, and the combination of preservation of history and conservation of nature can yield significant benefits to the State overall.

Most of New Hampshire's municipalities understand the benefits of preserving their heritage in the form of restored mill buildings or conserved town commons, but find themselves at odds with contemporary economic trends. The establishment of large-scale outlying retail outlets and distant residential development threatens to strip more traditional downtown commercial areas of their economic viability. Additionally, municipalities' own actions serve to undermine the vitality of the historic commercial centers they find so desirable. These actions include zoning ordinances that encourage sprawl and discourage redevelopment, locating educational facilities in places to which few children can safely walk to school, and extending municipal services such as water and sewer to undeveloped areas in the hopes of spurring development that adds to the tax base. Finally, the actions of other levels of government—county, state, and federal—in locating service facilities in outlying areas act to reduce the reasons for people to frequent the older in-town areas.

Although cultural and historical resources have great inherent value, the best chances of recognizing those resources and of preserving them for future generations are based in an understanding of their current economic impact. The essential question then, is how do we plan for continued economic growth in New Hampshire that capitalizes on the special qualities of our village squares and downtowns, our farms and factories, our forestlands, scenic vistas and quiet refuges? Underlying this question is the importance of identifying the cultural and historical assets that are worthy of protection, followed by a determination of actions that are appropriate to preserving those assets in a way that does not stifle economic growth, but promotes it.

In addition to encouraging and promoting preservation efforts, public policy should inhibit or prevent the conversion of productive agricultural and forestlands to more intensive uses, especially by avoiding the construction of public facilities on such lands. Municipalities should be assisted to develop land use regulations that focus on redevelopment and infill in existing built-up areas, rather than allowing or promoting residential and commercial sprawl.

**STRATEGY 1:**

Increase survey and recognition efforts to identify important cultural and historical resources.

Historical resource surveys and inventories are critical to making land use planning decisions. However, this information is only available for less than 25 percent of New Hampshire's communities with the greatest share of information developed by the Department of Transportation through its transportation planning process. Increasing historical resource survey and recognition efforts will help "the public to understand to role of preservation in community identity, uniqueness, prosperity, and well-being; instill pride; and connect people with their environment."<sup>1</sup> Communities can celebrate their contributions to New Hampshire's heritage and their individual identity through recognition of local historical resources.

## Strategy Implementation:

- A. Develop a database of historical resources to be made available to the public by integration into the NH GRANIT geographic information system.
- B. Conduct historic resource surveys of the State's historical and archaeological resources in all municipalities.
- C. Continue to encourage nominations to the State Register of Historic Places.
- D. Support nomination efforts to the National Register of Historic Places.
- E. Erect new historical markers and other signage to inform the public about specific places and resources.
- F. Increase public awareness of the State's historic sites through the press and media outlets.

**STRATEGY 2:**

Promote the development of a "preservation ethic" to be integrated into decision-making on a state, regional, and local level.

Surveys and inventories alone do not preserve the State's valued historic sites, but rather provide the background information to make informed decisions. After completing surveys, the next step to instituting a preservation ethic is education and development of guidance material. One impediment to a successful preservation ethic is the difficult nature of preserving historic structures while maintaining their historic integrity and simultaneously complying with building codes. Formal partnerships at the state, regional and local level can create an efficient mechanism for information sharing. Through a collaborative initiative, all levels of government can affect change and promote preservation in all planning efforts.

## Strategy Implementation:

- A. Encourage the establishment of and strengthen existing Certified Local Governments, Historic District Commissions, Heritage Commissions, and Main Street programs to help address local preservation concerns.
- B. Seek funding sources for conferences on building rehabilitation and historic preservation, as authorized by Chapter 266, Laws of 2002.
- C. Expand the Division of Historical Resources web site to provide additional resources targeted to political subdivisions, property owners, non-profit organizations, and developers interested in preserving historical resources.

- D. Develop a series of handbooks on:
  - Building codes and standards for historic structures;
  - Procedures and guidelines for local and state approval of preservation and rehabilitation projects; and
  - Resources available to assist municipalities, property owners, non-profit organizations, and developers with preservation and rehabilitation projects.
- E. Develop and produce new publications, pamphlets, videos, and other materials to extend the preservation message.
- F. Provide materials and best examples on the proper restoration of historical properties and preservation of artifacts associated with historic resources.

**STRATEGY 3:**  
 Create preservation opportunities through the partnership of local government, regional and state agencies, non-profit agencies, and private industry.

While no formal partnership exists between the Division of Historical Resources and the Department of Transportation (DOT), much of the existing historic resource survey data has been completed by DOT. Strengthening partnerships between state agencies can lead to greater opportunities for historic structure preservation and facilitate the development of new resources and educational opportunities for public and private entities. The Council on Resources and Development can serve as a vehicle for promoting change in state agency facility siting choices. Through further state agency collaboration, preservation planning can be integrated with transportation enhancements, community revitalization, and preservation of rural

character through supporting the State’s agriculture and forestry enterprises.

Strategy Implementation:

- A. Seek opportunities to cooperate with others to develop school programs and/or special materials (K-12, college-level and graduate programs) focusing on historic preservation.
- B. Assist the Council on Resources and Development to establish specific protocols for state agencies and organizations to incorporate historic preservation concerns into planning initiatives.
- C. Work with regional planning commissions and municipalities to identify key properties for protection or preservation through easements or purchase.
- D. Establish procedures to review state agency actions to encourage sustainable land use and promote reinvestment in existing infrastructure.
- E. Strengthen partnerships between the Division of Historical Resources and New Hampshire state agencies through memoranda of understanding or other joint initiatives.
- F. Establish a mechanism by which the regional planning commissions can solicit and/or assist in the preparation of municipal grant applications for public preservation efforts, especially when partnered with a non-profit or private entity.

**STRATEGY 4:**  
 Provide necessary funding and incentives to encourage and support preservation efforts.

The Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP), the largest source of preservation funding

dedicated by the State of New Hampshire, awarded \$12 million in funding to historic preservation and natural resource protection at its peak in fiscal year 2002-2003. Since that record year, funding levels were reduced to \$1.5 million per fiscal year until new legislation (2007) created an annual \$6 million dedicated funding source for the program. These funds are shared each year between conservation and preservation activities and are appropriated by the New Hampshire legislature.<sup>2</sup> While there are other private and federal grant funds for preservation efforts, the State does not have one exclusive funding source directed to preserve its own historic resources. State-owned historic structures such as the Robert Frost Home and Wentworth Coolidge Mansion are in need of repairs without a source of funds to make the investment or improvements. New dedicated funding sources are necessary to preserve the State's significant archaeological and historic properties that are both public and privately owned. Programs such as LCHIP and tax or other public incentives are essential to supporting the State's preservation efforts.

Strategy Implementation:

- A. Increase funding of the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program for both conservation and preservation activities.
- B. Increase funding for the barn preservation grant fund established under RSA 224-C:28.
- C. Assist and support applicants seeking grants under the State Land and Community Heritage Incentive Program.
- D. Encourage the use of federal Preservation Tax Incentives and provide technical guidance to interested parties.
- E. Develop a grant program and tax incentives for the preservation of barns and other agricultural properties.

- F. Train staff at each of the State's nine regional planning commissions to be preservation specialists as one means to make cost-effective assistance available locally for a broad range of preservation activities.
- G. Maintain and repair state owned historic sites.

**STRATEGY 5:**  
 Plan for continued economic growth in New Hampshire that capitalizes on the special qualities of our village squares, downtowns, and historic resources.

Knowledge of and reinvestment in historical resources permits informed land use planning that effectively preserves both natural and historic features, and provides ideal locations for affordable housing and economic opportunities. For New Hampshire's communities, it provides a foundation for downtown or village development and growth, attracting businesses, tourists, and consumers to unique centers and architecture. The New Hampshire Main Street Program is a successful example of how preservation of "traditional centers of community life, commerce and local government" coupled with good design, economic restructuring, and community organization and promotion can lead to economic growth.<sup>3</sup> Historic preservation is not just a luxury for those who can afford to preserve landmarks but can be a way to address "safety, decent housing, jobs, education, [and] community life."<sup>4</sup>

Strategy Implementation:

- A. Establish tax credits that further encourage the development of affordable housing that is consistent

with smart growth principles, and includes rehabilitation of older structures.

- B. Expand the discretionary easement program currently focused on agricultural structures to include any historic structure, as well as structures within existing downtown areas.
- C. Combine affordable housing efforts with historic preservation goals through the cooperation of the historic resource and housing advocacy agencies.
- D. Require state agencies to locate new facilities in downtown areas or justify why such a location is impractical or undesirable rather than to simply consider the smart growth principles of RSA 9-B in making such decisions.
- E. Support and promote the New Hampshire Main Street Program.

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<sup>1</sup> New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources. "What We Do." <[http://www.nh.gov/nhdhr/what\\_we\\_do.html](http://www.nh.gov/nhdhr/what_we_do.html)> February 7, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Land and Community Heritage Investment Program. "Grant Awards to Date." <<http://www.lchip.org/GrantAwards.htm>> February 7, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> New Hampshire Main Street Program. "Main Street's Four Point, Eight-Principle Approach" and "Program." <<http://www.nhcdfa.org/mainstreet.html>> February 27, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources. "What We Do." <[http://www.nh.gov/nhdhr/what\\_we\\_do.html](http://www.nh.gov/nhdhr/what_we_do.html)> February 7, 2007.